

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Revenues and Benefits Service Update November 2019



Purpose of the Briefing

- To raise awareness of the services delivered by the Revenues and Benefits Service
- To inform the board of the annual reports that are taken to Cabinet
- To raise awareness of the Revenues and Benefits Service's policy framework



- Administration of Housing Benefit
- Administration of Council Tax Reduction
- Administration of Council Tax Billing
- Recover of Council Tax
- Administration of Business Rates (National Non Domestic Rates NNDR) Billing
- Recovery of Business Rates
- Administration of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
- Administration of Sandwell's Local Welfare Provision (LWP) scheme
- Cashier Services in Oldbury, West Bromwich and Smethwick
- General Debt Recovery



Workloads

133,768 Residential Properties £111.4m Council Tax collected annually

11,200 Commercial Properties £104.9m Business Rates collected annually

£71m General Debt collected annually

23,200 Housing Benefit Claimants £114.3 million Housing Benefit paid annually

33,900 Residents claiming Council Tax Reduction Costing £29m

Customer Services Team handled 145,000 telephone calls and 21,000 face to face enquiries

Cashiers processed 145,000 transactions amounting to a total of £45m



Performance

- **Council Tax Collection: in-year collection rate 98.6%**
 - Rated Best metropolitan Council out of all 36 mets **for the last 3 years**
 - **44th** out of all 408 LA's (all council types)
- **Business Rates Collection: in-year collection rate 98.2%**
 - **2nd** best West Midlands met in 2018/19
 - **11th** out of all 36 metropolitan councils
- **What we collect through Council Tax and Business Rates provides over 80% of Sandwell's total funding**
- We collect **£4.1m** more each year than the metropolitan council average
- Last month the service won a national award for 'excellence in performance management'



Annual Timetable

Cabinet
JAN



Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) Report – The service, in conjunction with our Cabinet Member, carries out an annual review of the LCTRS. Consultation with residents and stakeholders takes place on any changes. The scheme is presented for Cabinet to recommend that Council approves the scheme for the new financial year

Cabinet
FEB



Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework Report – Policies are reviewed annually by the service and then presented to Cabinet for approval

Cabinet
DEC



Council Tax Base Report
Business Rates Estimate Report
The service estimates the income likely to be generated through Council Tax and Business Rates for the new financial year. The Council uses these estimates when setting the budget



- There are several areas of Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits legislation which allow the Council to exercise discretion or apply local policy
- It is important for transparency and consistency in application and decision making that we document these areas and the Revenues and Benefits Policy Framework achieves this.
- The legislation requires a number of these policies to be approved by Cabinet/Council



Policy	Purpose
Corporate Debt Recovery Policy	To ensure a coordinated approach to managing multiple debts owed to the Council by the same resident
Council Tax Award of Discount Policy	The Local Government Act 1992, gives local authorities the flexibility to determine what, if any, discounts should be applied to empty properties. This policy sets out Sandwell's approach
Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy	Details the circumstances where we can consider reducing the Council Tax payable
Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Policy	DHPs provide additional financial support with rent payments. The policy outlines the qualifying criteria



<p>NDR Discretionary Rate Relief Policy</p>	<p>Details the many circumstances where a business may be able to apply for relief on their business rates. Some reliefs are mandatory and some are discretionary</p>
<p>Local Welfare Provision Policy</p>	<p>Sandwell is one of very few councils still offering this support. LWP provides assistance / support to vulnerable people in hardship situations. Such as white goods; furniture; fuel; food parcels</p>
<p>NDR Hardship Relief Policy</p>	<p>Specifies how Sandwell will administer requests for relief from payment of Business Rates</p>
<p>Joint Policy for Establishing Eligible Support and Accommodation Charges</p>	<p>Outlines how we will work with Adult Services to provide a joined up approach in establishing eligible accommodation and care charges.</p>
<p>Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy</p>	<p>This policy details the various methods of recovery we may use in order to recover overpaid Housing Benefit</p>



Thankyou for listening



Any Questions / Thoughts / Comments...

